At the cellar Craig and Jake decided to start on the log cabin. Although it was cold out, the BlackHawks grabbed their tools heading for the woods. Carlo wasted no time chopping down the thin trees. That covered the area. To make it easier on us all, Jake suggested that the cabin be a simple square. With the entrance on the roof. This would make it difficult for anyone to enter. Other than ourselves. We worked together chopping trees and brush. A large area needed clearing. Jake supervised. This was going to be our winter home. Nobody was to know. October moved swiftly. The exterior was completed. During the month we had gone up to Clark Street a number of times. Carrying off some more plywood and other materials. Most of the materials for the interior were kept in the center of the square. The trees that were cut down provided not only the frame work but also camaflauge for the cabin.

We had even gotten some tar paper for the roof. So it wouldn't leak. Hundreds upon hundreds of nails were driven into the wood. The only way others would destroy it was by burning it down. Each day after school was spent finishing the inside. Craig and Scott made some make-shift bunkbeds. We all had a place to lay down. The entrance to the cabin was centred on the flat roof. Below the entrance was a small trash can. We used it for a stove to heat the cabin.

If anyone tried entering the cabin, they'd fall into the can. We knew where we put the ladder, Carlo had made. You'd have to reach in the entrance and pull it to the opening to climb down. One way in, one way out. The cabin was completed by the first week of December. It was 1957. Up until Christmas, we spent most of the time going back and forth to the cabin. Oh we'd hit the Plaza, at least once a week. Grub's on Sundays. Christmas Vacation came.

This was the Rendsah's first Christmas without our father. My mother tried making it a good one but it proved impossible. The old man failed to pay support. Welfare didn't give a damn. We made our own. His Highness guided Rodent and I Christmas shoplifting. Each of the kids were going to get a gift, he exclaimed. Ma too! We took some small toys and wrapped them in grocery bags. Rodent got our mother a night gown. Nothing fancy. We did have a tree. She managed to save the lights and ornaments from the previous Christmas. Nobody was in a hurry, to get up that day. What for?

My mother had left a glass of milk and a couple of cookies for Santa to enjoy. Rodent and I drank the milk and ate the cookies before dawn. The other kids thought Santa had come and gone. Not the King. He was Santa this year. It didn't take long to get all the presents open. Although we all had sad faces, my mother kept us busy cleaning the mess we made.

The church had given some of the tenants at G.B.V. a turkey, some can goods and some YUK! egg-nog. We waited all morning for Ma to cook the meal. We'd been used to sandwiches. A turkey was going to be special. If she could cook it. She wasn't known to be a very good cook. Matter of fact, she was a horrible cook. My sister Bev had prepared a few meals for us before. We ate them. Well, at least Ma tried.

It turned out pretty good. Not a thing was left. His Majesty sucked down the milk as usual. The only thing that was left was the bones. Not a child was hungry. After eating, my brothers and I went sliding on the hill next to our apartment.

Going in and out of the house drove my mother crazy. She would yell at us if we got all wet. We did. Your not coming in the house with those wet cloths! she'd scream. We knew where to go. Carlo's cellar. His Highness went down to our cellar before going to Jake's. Everything was gone. All that we'd been saving was taken. A pack of cigarettes was the only thing left. We grabbed them and closed the broken door. Jake and Carlo were still eating their Italian Christmas dinner, when we arrived. We called out, Car- - - lo!, Ja - - -ke! Mrs. Buffone came to the door. The boys will be out in a few minutes. she said. We sat on the cellar stairs. Carlo came running out. What did you guys get for Christmas? We shrugged our shoulders. Two steps and a jump. Carlo opened the cellar door to let us in. We were freezing by now. Go ahead warm up said Carlo.

Jake'll be down after he eats. He's eating some pizza. By now, most of the BlackHawks were in the cellar. The only ones we were waiting for were Shawn and Brian. They finally showed up. Everyone looked the same. Nothing new. As far as we were concerned Christmas was over. Back to BlackHawk business. Everyone was too depressed to do much of anything.

Craig took a vote to go up to the cabin. We left the cellar. Scott grabbed the dirty books off the desk. He put them inside his coat. It seemed like days trying to get to the cabin. Every step got deeper and deeper. We made it. Jake got the fire going, while Scott passed out the books. Everyone took a spot. Jake made sure we'd be warm. Before Christmas Jake and a couple other guys went around the different clothes lines and took the blankets hanging outside to dry. They were still a bit damp. Craig said we were going to have a contest. Everybody had to get under their blankets and pull on their peckers. Whoever got jizz first was the winner. The whole cabin was shakin'. We looked at the dirty books every few minutes. Shawn and Brian's peckers raised the center of the blankets. O o o o's and Ar r r r's were heard throughout the cabin. Come on you fuckin' dick! replied Rodent.

Pumpin away. Here it comes! Here it comes! screamed Shawn. Shawn won. He had jizz all over the place. Brian came next. What a smile. Jake and the rest of us kept going until we were all too tired. It felt good anyway. We all laughed. Shawn was proud. See, I told you Black folks got bigger dicks than anyone else! Sure, sure, said Jake. That's cause you guys practice more than everybody.

Jake told some more stories. We tried again before we went back to Carlo's cellar. Shawn won. It was harder flipping the pages over after we got back. Shawn's was glued shut. We put the books on the desk to dry out. My brother and I stayed down the cellar until our clothes were almost completely dry. When we got home the other kids were in bed. Ma was sitting in a chair smoking a cigarette. Where you boys been? she said. Sliding ma, with Carlo and Jake. "Well it's a good thing you don't have school tomorrow".

His Majesty ran upstairs. I followed. At first I thought he was going to the bathroom to wash up. He locked the door. I stood outside the door listening. I heard pages turning and peeked thru the key hole. His Highness was practicing. I didn't even see him take the book from Carlo's. I went into my sister's room until he came out. There was only one place he could put that book. Under the mattress. I decided I'd give it another try when everybody went to sleep. No success. Time to sleep.

The week went by slowly. It was so cold that winter. The socks I used for gloves didn't last long at all. Everytime I stole a pair of mittens, somebody would steal them from me. The grocery store in our cellar was doing fine. The place was packed with all kinds of can goods and cigarettes. We watched the cellar carefully. Nobody was going to take our stuff again.

It was near Easter now. The whole Valley exploded with people walking around. Everyone was out. Spring was finally here! By now we had robbed every store from the zoo to Lincoln Square. Life was looking better. We thought. Much time was spent away from home. My mother always said, we could go anywhere as long as we stayed out of trouble. As far as she knew. we'd always been outside doing what kids do. Playing. Our games were a bit different from what the other kids did.

With Spring present there were all kinds of ideas opening up in Jake's mind. One Saturday, he had a few of us go to Spag's. We needed a half dozen or more flashlights. No problem. Spag's was always so crowded. This made things so much easier for the BlackHawks. The average shopper towered over us. Being short was to our advantage. Get into the crowd and move fast. Follow the adults out as though they were your parents. Kids weren't suspected as much as the older crowd. Carlo led us in and out. We always managed to pick up a few odds and ends.

Nuts and bolts fit our pockets nicely. Whatever fit, hit. We returned to the zoo after making a few scenic stops at the Lake Bridge and by the Regatta. If the water hadn't been so cold we probably would have jumped off the bridge. Not this day. Jake had other ideas in mind. My brothers and I went to our house before going to Jake's.

The three of us walked in finding a couple Police Officers standing in the kitchen. Whispering. Damn, she's got three more, an officer replied. Something was wrong. The house was quiet. What's the matter here? Questioned the Rodent. Where's my mother? She had to go to the Hospital. You boy's stick around, said the other officer. What happened? What happened? I asked impatiently. Your mother didn't feel good. She had to see a Doctor. The officer tried his best to avoid answering us.

One of my mother's friends came over. She looked at the three of us and shook her head. Where's Ma, we asked. She just looked at the police. His Highness ran towards the door. Come on Rabbi, Rodent let's go! The King was scared. We all were. We didn't know what was going on. It took a minute to run to Jake's. We told him and the others who was at our house.

The Enemy. Jake asked if any one followed. No, nobody said Rodent. Good, than we can go ahead with our plans. You guys can find out later what happened to your mother. Even though we didn't see much see much of Ma, she was always on our mind. She would always be home if we needed her. Not today.

The Tunnel

We headed for the bottom of Constitution Ave. This was also out territory. About fifty yards away from the street was a tunnel entrance. It connected to Great Brook. A large cement opening with broken bars, sticking out around it. The hole wasn't that big. We all had to bend down to get in. This was top secret stuff. The BlackHawks weren't the only ones who knew about it. Virtually every kid in the zoo knew. But we were the ones who explored into it.

There had always been talk about Alligators, water snakes, rats and monsters. Gulp! Until now I ran passed the entrance. Jake had other things in mind. Like going in and following the tunnel to the end. The only thing we needed was a flashlight. But one wasn't enough. That's why Jake wanted the lights. Every other man carried one.

Alright! stick together. No babies. If you don't want to go in, then don't! Go home, Jake said. Everyone stood motionless staring into the tunnel. I'll go first replied Craig. Jake went next. We all bent down and began creeping up the tunnel. It was jet black. The only light was from the flashlights. We were nuts to butts. Very little talking at first. I could detect the nervousness in the others voices.

Move slow. Watch out for the metal rods sticking out of the sides. They'll cut you. Craig kept reminding us to keep low. The echo of the water passing between our legs roared. There was no way to keep our feet dry. As soon as we stepped in, our sneakers were drenched. Splashing through the tunnel beneath the street above. I kept thinking about my mother. I also thought about the monsters. Craig was first in the tunnel. The monsters would eat him before eating me.

Rodent held on to my belt. I kept my hand on Carlo's lower back. Stop! rest here a minute yelled Craig. Shawn kept mumbling something about gigantic frogs. There gonna get even with us ! It went silent. S h h h h h. Be quiet. Stay here, I'll be right back said Craig. I hear something just a little ways ahead. Don't move. Craig came back in a few minutes. It seemed like days.You guys, there's a man hole cover up ahead. There's some room to stand too. Come on! The first man hole was comforting. We could adjust our backs. The squeaking of our sneakers made us break out in laughter. It was cold under the street.

New Vista Lane was above us. Cars could be heard driving over the man hole. As long as you were close enough to the cover. Time to move on. This time Jake went first. Slowly through the tunnel we went. It seemed endless. Walking was difficult. One step at a time while bent over. The water rushed past our feet. It was only a couple inches deep. We stopped at a few more man holes. Jake led the rest of the way. After a couple hours, we reached the other end. It was a large opening with enormous bars guarding the entrance. Even though we were small, we still couldn't fit through the bars. That was Jake's only flaw regarding this adventure. He hadn't tested the other end. Shawn was known to squeeze through anything, but not this time. Nobody could. That meant only one thing. To get out of this place we had to go back through the tunnel.

We rested awhile before going back. This end of the tunnel was across the street from my house on Chino Ave. Sometimes we were yelled at for playing over there. Most of the time the water was low. Except when it rained. We'd never go through on a rainy day. Not up til now anyway. His Highness led the way back. I felt better knowing it was going to be over in a little while.

All of us made it out safely. Oh there were a few scratches, but we made it. Jake said this would be our top secret hideout. Even the cops would never guess where we were. The trees were growing leaves. Pussy Willows everywhere. Spring in the valley hid the trash that had built up over the Winter. Since we were still wet, Craig and Jake decided to play horses, running through the brook. We followed the brook down to the Home Farm.

Shopping carts, balls, paper and broken toys polluted the brook. Beavers weren't needed to clog it up. There was always plenty of debris floating down to dam it up. We stopped at the Tarzan swing someone had made earlier. We all took turns flying across the brook like Tarzan himself. The rope was very thick. All you had to do was jump on and sit on the large knot. Hold on tight! yelled Jake. Don't fall, you'll crack your fuckin head open. After everyone got their turn we continued on down the path next to the brook. Jake went off the path into the bush to drop a load. We waited. Suddenly he came out of the bushes yelling Wolf! Wolf! We scattered. A minute later we met below the banking by Tacoma Street. Jake said he saw a large White Wolf. Get some sticks and rocks. We'll get him. A few minutes later we were in the bushes throwing rocks and hitting the brush with the sticks.

Suddenly we heard some kind of squeeking sounds. Craig movedahead. You guys! come here! Craig was standing there smiling. Just below lay a bunch of puppies.Baby Wolves we thought. The mother wasn't around. They moved. One stood up starting to play with Carlo. The rest of them followed. We picked them up laughing as they licked our faces. What are we going to do with them? asked Shawn. Take'em home of course said Jake. We can't, housing won't let us have Wolves, said His Highness. Since when do we listen to the housing authority?

jake grabbed the pure white one. I want this one. You guys take the ones you want. We played with them awhile. It started to get dark. We'll put them in the cellar, said Jake. We'll have to get some wolf food up Grub's. Carlo and Rodent stayed with the pups. The rest of us went to Grub's. He was his usual self asking questions and watching us with his evil eyes.

We didn't stay long. The pups were probably getting hungry. We had to hurry back. All of us played with the pups a little while longer down the cellar. It was time to go home now. To what though. Who would be there? I asked mydelf.

When my brothers and I got home the door was locked. Mrs. Wilkinsstuck her head out calling to us. "I told you boys you were going to pay for your sins, she exclaimed. Your mothers in the hospital with a nervous breakdown. What's a nervous breakdown? I asked. Never you mind that boy, come here. We put our heads down going into her apartment. "I'm suppose to call the police, she said. His Highness played with his fingers, while Rodent chewed his nails in a frenzy. I pissed my pants. You boys are going away for a few weeks. Your mother needs alot of rest. About an hour later the fuzz arrived. We're taking you across town until your mother can come back home.

Some of you will go someplace else. Probably with a neighbor. We all began crying. You can go as you are. We were still soaked and mud covered our clothes. They brought us to some house on Vernon Street. Saint Agnes Guild I think. It was some kind of shelter. It was prison to us. Three BlackHawks trapped like rats. We cried everynight for the next three weeks. We didn't go to school at all. Everyday we'd just get up and walk around the house waiting to ear.

I was looking out the window when Ma arrived. She smiled. I told my brothers she was outside. We all ran to her. Another hug. I thought. She looked sad.And very tired. Come on boys, let's go home. We hadn't seen my other brothers and sisters until we got out of the shelter. It was a great reunion. Back to fighting and raising hell. My mother slipped into her room and fell into bed. My brothers and I sneaked out the door and headed for Jake's. All the boys were there. Carlo asked where we've been. We told them what happened to my mother, and where we went. Jake said his mother had a nervous breakdown before. She's alright now. You guys came back just in time. We're going to the Pig Farm by St. Pierre's tomorrow. replied Jake. It's gonna be fun.

We all played cards and looked through the dirty books that night. We were back to normal. Carlo played with an ax handle while Jake and Craig planned tomorrows hike. We'll have to bring some lunch with us "cause we'll be gone almost all day. Get here early. We ain't waiting for nobody, Jake said. I didn't sleep that night. Neither did his Highness or Rodent. We all tossed and turned. I kept thinking about my mother, and how she seemed.

The Pig Farm

The next morning, I looked out the bathroom window and saw the sun shining brightly. The King and Rodent were already out of bed. I dashed downstairs and found them both sucking down some cereal. "Go get some stuff down our cellar to eat on the way to the Pig Farm, said His Majesty. When I got back, my brothers were sitting on the steps outside our apartment. Let's go! yelled Rodent. With my shirt stuffed with cans , we met at Jake's.

Carlo was wrestling with Scott on the floor. Shawn and Brian stood by the desk pulling at a dirty book. Jake turned from the desk and told everyone to be quiet. He started talking. "Some of you guys ain't been to the Pig Farm yet, right? The Rendash's Shawn and Brian nodded. Jake went on. The Pig Farm is a long ways from here. We gotta go through some woods, a large open field and then more woods. The farm is run by jail guards. The jail birds will be around too. We got to be real sneaky when we get near the pigs. Their big and dangerous. Carlo almost got killed by one last summer. They get barbed wire around the whole place. If you hear a truck coming everyone has to scatter fast.

Don't wait for me to make a move. If those guards get us they'll beat our asses. They come around at different times. Remember, you can't be slow. We started on Tacoma walking towards Clark Street.

Jake took the school path. He cut across East Mountain Street. Ahead was a large open area. Mostly tall grass. Carlo was very familiar with the terrain. He knew where all the woodchuck holes were. We spread out forming a small line, keeping in step. We were like soldiers, looking for the enemy. Scott took the point. It was beautiful out. A perfect Spring day. We walked past the large open field, coming upon a section of woods. It didn't take long to go through.

Jake pointed towards the left. That's where they grow most of the vegatables. We'll come back at the end of summer and get some. he said. I was wondering where all the pig's were. Carlo said there were lots of them. Big and small. When we reached the barbed wire surrounding the pigs, Jake paused. Grab some big sticks, make sure they're hard. Rodent, hold the wire so we can get in.

The pigs began to gather closer to eachother. The little pigs ran nervously to their mothers. "Get that Big mother fucker over there, shouted Craig. We all went after him. He was enormous. Carlo tried jumping on his back, falling into the mud. Rodent wacked him on the ass. Jake had a pipe. He hit the pig right in the middle of his back. Bending the pipe in half. The pig was furious. He began chasing Scott and the King. We ran to the fence. It was crazy. The pig wanted one of us if not all of us. He stood still in the mud. Squealing in pain. Jake told us to spread out, and climb over the fence in another spot.

A minute later we had the pig surrounded. The other pigs ran to another area. NOW! yelled Jake. We began beating the pig continuously until our sticks broke. The pig was hurting, but kept chasing us. Carlo grabbed the baby pig and began running with him. He was laughing loudly. The little pig squealed for it's mother. Carlo was about to climb over the fence when one of the larger pigs rushed him. Hitting him in the leg. Carlo fell over. The baby pig got free.

Carlo was mad now. He grabbed a large rock, and threw it at one of the larger pigs. We all were going after anything that was near. The enemy squealed loudly as we cornered them. No contest. We were too many. We tormented them for about another hour. I heard something coming. It was a truck. The man driving spotted us. He began yelling while shaking his fist out his window. We scattered. I fell. Most of us slipped while trying to climb the fence. My heart beat pounded my chest. The truck was getting closer. Fortunately he couldn't go to fast because of the muddy road he was on.

It was filled with holes. I followed Carlo. The truck stopped suddenly. A few minutes later, we all met by the hill. Next to the vegatable field. Everyone was bent over. Trying to catch their breaths. I kept looking towards the Pig Farm. No truck. What a relief. A few minutes later we headed back to the zoo.

The Red Cats

When we got back, Jake said after we eat, we'll go check up on the cabin. Carlo and Rodent went to the store bus to grab some stuff to eat. They brought back a bunch of cup-cakes. We scawfed them down. Jake went into his apartment, bringing back some Kool-Aid. Scott stood up. We going or what? he asked. Yeah! Yeah! said Jake as he swallowed the last of the Kool-Aid from the milk bottle. We hadn't been to the cabin in awhile. With all the rain it must be soaking wet.

When we reached the cabin it looked the same as always. On the outside, Carlo climbed on to the roof. Hey! somebody's been here. The cover to the door was gone. Jake looked to the ground. It's down here! he replied. Carlo climbed in. He began yelling up to the entrance. They knocked over the fire can and tore the place apart! He climbed out quickly. Jake! it was the Red Cats. They sprayed their name on the can. Sure enough.

Jake climbed in and took a look for himself. Who's the Red Cats? I asked. Scott explained. We never told you new guys about these assholes. They live up above the zoo. They're Rich kids. They don't like us at all, 'cause were from the projects. Some of them live up on Burncoat . We had it out with them a few times before. They think they're tough. We always beat em. You'll see. Jake was furious. He climbed out of the cabin quickly. The rest of us took a look. It was wrecked. They tore everything apart. "We'll get'em for this. Just wait and see, he said. We left the cabin a few minutes later.

Jake led the way. He kept thinking of ideas to get even with the Red Cats. He stood like a General before his men. "We're gonna wait for the perfect time to get them". We'll ambush them. Jake and Craig went over the plans.

Carlo grabbed the cover to the tin trash can. "We can use these as shields. We'll get'em with rocks and beat'em with sticks. The Red Cats Die! he exclaimed. The BlackHawks were willing to defend their territory at any given time. Even the older kids in the zoo understood. The name spread throughout the zoo.

The Buffone's, The Rendash's and the Hampton's along with other BlackHawks were respected. By the other kids in the zoo. The people would sometimes stop everything just to watch us pass by. You could feel their questions. "What are they up to now? Where are they going? the little hoods. We'd just flip them the finger and mumble under our breaths.

The cops despised us. They were frustrated. The BlackHawks were blamed for everything that happened inside the zoo. The Police couldn't catch us in the act. They wanted Jake and Carlo badly. Jake was too smart. He knew the zoo, far better than most. Living there only educated him further. There wasn't a bush, tree, cellar or any hiding place Jake hadn't hid in. He was a Master at disappearing. I remember a few times during the winter, we all had taken a cab back to the zoo. Jake always told us what we were going to do, before it happened. If we didn't want to do it, he'd give us a chance to go home.

Of course if you didn't go along you no longer were a BlackHawk. Very few people left the gang. The only way out was by being lucky enough to move out of the zoo. When we reached the zoo, Jake and Craig would be by the car doors. Jake always told the driver to stop someother place. Never near the cellar. As soon as the driver stopped, we all scattered in different directions. We'd hide. A couple minutes later we'd peek out of our spots. To make sure the coast was clear.

The Cabbies, almost never came after us. If they did somebody would take the cab for a quick ride. Not us, the bigger kids. Rodent and Carlo had the habit of going back to the taxi and getting the change maker. Rodent would aggravate the driver from a distance. Making him angry enough to chase after him. You couldn't catch the Rodent. Carlo would watch, while the driver ran after Rodent. Then, he'd go to the cab, grab the changer and run. It never failed. Another bunch of people who didn't learn. The Cops, wanted us for them incidents.

Others too. Carlo took alot of abuse from the fuzz. Lots of times, we'd be walking up Tacoma Street and be stopped by the cops. There was this one detective in particular, who hated Carlo. He'd make fun of the way he talked. Carlo wished he were dead. I did too. This cop used to take him for a ride and beat on him. I seen him slap Carlo repeatedly many times. The cop yelled "you little Wop!, your a project scum. You and your family belong in the street. You little ginny! He never gave him a chance. Carlo was guilty of al[illegible] of things, just like the rest of us. He was always accused of the things he didn't do. The cops way of handling things was the same way as the adults.

Beating. Always beatings. Jake knew they could never touch us as long as they didn't see us. Jake was so careful. The cops never suspected him. Nobody did. The tunnel had proved to be the perfect hide-out from the fuzz. After we'd hit big on the plaza, or did some destruction in the zoo, we'd meet at the tunnel. Sometimes spending hours hiding. There were times when the cops were just above us. We'd hear them talking and know their plans. We'd be under the manhole covers listening to them. They never knew. They couldn't fit in the tunnel anyway. I thought about the Red Ctas. I didn't even know what they looked like.

A few weeks went by and my mother seemed to be getting a little better. It rained alot. So my brothers and I went home after school, almost everyday. Even my mother noticed. Mrs. Wilkins banged on the wall with her spoons. Just about every morning.Stop making that gard-damn-noise! You could hear through the kitchen wall. We faught constantly. Ma did everything she could to stop us, but it was her against us. Her boys were growing fast. Too fast. His Highness was almost as tall as she was. That was trouble. Rodent was always there protecting her from the Kings smart alec remarks. Rodent followed my mother everywhere. The only thing that seperated them was the BlackHawks. We could see we were becoming too much for our mother again. Besides, it was time to go get Craig and Scott. To meet in the cellar.

While we had been driving our mother up a wall, Jake had met with a member of the Red Cats. Jake set a meeting between both gangs. Neither gang trusted the other.

They were rich kids. We weren't. Down the cellar Jake told us only that the Red Cats would meet us by the tunnel at Chino Ave. entrance. He told us only a couple BlackHawks would meet there at the tunnel. The others would wait for them at the flood control above the tunnel. Some more in the woods. The ambush was set. That day we met down my cellar. Feasted on the cans of fruit cocktail. We went to our places. Silently we waited. Jake, Craig, His Highness and Scott were the ones who would meet with the Cats. When Jake gave the signal we'd all come running out screaming our brains out. S h h h h said Rodent. I hear them coming. It was them. They looked bigger than us.

I started shakin. Be still asshole, whispered the Rodent. Let's watch and see. I was lying in the brush. Jake stood there with the others, right behind him. I saw Craig look towards me. The biggest Red Cat approached Jake confidently. So here's the meeting, he said. Looking at Jake like he was going to hit him any second. What would you like to talk about, he asked. The log cabin. You fuckers tore it apart. It's ours! replied Jake. So what! the kid said. We can do whatever we want with it. It's in our woods, not yours.

That's project woods, said Jake. No it isn't, it's ours, said the kid. You assholes destroy d it and your going to fix it yelled Jake. nd you ain't going to go in it no more! "Fuck you and your BlackHawks, he said. You ain't shit! Jake turned his head to Craig. Lifting his nose to the sky. "What if we don't? asked the kid. Jake paused. What do you think, just 'cause you got more guys here,you think your gonna beat us? he said. Maybe, the kid replied. You assholes ain't gonna do shit! Jake signaled. We all came running from the flood control and bushes with rocks and sticks. Some of us had the trash can covers. Jake grabbed the biggest cat and began choking him, and throwing him to the ground.

Rodent got punched in the face and moved away. I went after the kid who got him. I got a hold of his legs. I sunk my teeth into his leg. I wouldn't let go. Carlo came to me after beating three of th cats. He went insane on the kid I was biting. I had to pull him off the kid. Some of the Red Cats ran up the hill. The others layed there crying. It was over.

You fuckers are stupid he yelled. Nobody defeats the BlackHawks. We all cheered. A few days later we checked on the cabin. It was burned down! The Red Cats. It had to be the Red Cats.

The BlackHawk Gang In 1958

The BlackHawk Gang
in 1958
were little boys
with little hate

They came together
to save their space
they stuck together
like first grade paste

Their mothers tried
to raise them well
the tears they cried
came strai ht from hell

They stole all day
but not for greed
it's just the way
when your in need

The BlackHawk Gang
in 1958
were little boys
with little hate

Their fathers left
without a word
they spread their wings
just like a bird

But they grew up
they had no choice
with what they had
they had no voice

Now looking back
don't seem so bad
The BlackHawk Gang
was all I had

Mt. Wachusett

We never did go back to the cabin. Jake said the Red Cats would probably continue to destroy anything we build, in that area because it was so close to their territory. The cabin was history. Weeks passed by quickly. The BlackHawks spent that time stealing and raising hell in the zoo. We had stolen a number of bicycles from different neighborhoods. Because Craig and Jake wanted to take a long bike ride up to Mt. Wachusett. Nobody had bicycles before this. Except when somebody else in the projects would let us borrow it for a little while. We still didn't get enough for everyone to have one. It was my luck that I had to ride on the bar. So did Carlo, Rodent and Cory.

My brother Rodent told our mother, that we'd be playing baseball up at the school the morning we left. Jake never told us how far we were going to go. We found out soon enough. Princeton was a great distance from G.B.V. but that's where the mountain stood. It was exciting. We'd have to walk up most of the hills we came upon. Nobody was strong enough to peddle up.

It gave me a chance to check out all the nice houses along houses along the way. It was almost summer. A few more days of school and summer vacation. We couldn't wait.Along the way we had to walk up this steep hill. Which started near the base of the mountain. Carlo and Scott loved opening up the mailboxes that stood by the road. Not too many houses now. Just alot of woods, remarked Jake.

We were slowly climbing the hill when Jake spotted what he thought was a rubber tube. For a bicycle hanging on a couple branches. It was about twenty feet from the road. Jake pointed towards it. "Go get that tube, Carlo, Jake ordered. Carlo picked up a long stick off the ground and walked closer to the tree. Suddenly the tube moved. Carlo jumped back. "It's a gar damn snake! he yelled.

We stood there stunned. Hit it with the stick and get him to the ground yelled! His Highness. Come on! Come on! do it! Carlo forced the snake down to the ground and began chasing it towards us. Let's get the son of a bitch! said Craig. We were all used to seeing snakes, but this one was different. He was BIG! Jake yelled, it's a Black Racer. Catch him. We all surrounded the snake. Carlo ended up stepping on him . Holding him as he wrapped himself around Carlo's leg.

Jake quickly grabbed the snake, right behind his head and held on tightly. We stood there with our jaws hanging low. "Look up there! said Jake. We'll stuff him in the mailbox. I followed far behind. Jake took the snake and had thrown him into the box. He closed the door. Wait until these people come to pick up their mail. Ha ha, ha, ha, laughed Carlo. We all cracked up. Let's get out of here before anyone comes. ordered Jake. It was still morning. We had made it to the top of Mt. Wachusett by mid afternoon. What a sight! We could see the state of Massachusetts in all directions. Not a cloud was visible,

The sky was my favorite color, blue. We had taken turns pushing the bikes up the mountain. We were exhausted. Carlo and the Rodent passed out some candy, they had stolen from the store at the base of the mountain. Worcester was almost twenty-two miles away. Craig said we'd better get going soon because it going to get dark.

They didn't have very many street lights, out this way. The ride back was going to be quite an adventure in itself. I prayed the brakes would work as we started down the mountain. We made it to the base in about fifteen minutes and rested a moment.

Jake suddenly remembered the snake. Let's go and see if it's still in the mail box, he said. It wasn't far from the base. Everyone slowly rode closer to the box. We all got off the bikes, and sat on the other side of the road watching. About twenty minutes later we saw an old lady heading towards the box. This was it ! The moment we all had hoped would happen. She hadn't suspected a thing. We stood up as she placed her hand on the door. Down it opened, and as she bent over to reach in we watched her jump off the ground.

She ran hysterically towards the house. We couldn't stop laughing. Jake stood there proud as could be.We got on our bikes and waited a few seconds while the snake crawled out of the box. Quickly vanishing into the woods. "She might call the fuzz, said Craig. We better get going before they come. We made it. It was getting pretty dark by the time we reached the zoo.

Everyone was so tired. We all put the bikes down Carlo's cellar and headed home. That's all we talked about for a week. "That poor old lady.

"Mt. Pleasant Country Club"

School was out. The zoo was buzzing with kids everywhere. Craig and Jake wanted to get the summer off to a good start. There were so many things we could do. The cellar at my house was full with can goods and cigarettes. And of course anything else the BlackHawks could store. Mrs. Wilkins watched my brothers and I very closely. She would peek out her window whenever she knew we were around. My mother and Mrs. Wilkins had grown close. Mrs. Wilkins kept my mother informed about our behavior outside. Constantly complaining of the fights in the house. We'd gotten used to her banging her spoons. She never did get used to us. I didn't worry about people too much. Mostly divorced women who'd stay home sipping coffee and smoking cigarettes all day. Gossiping about everyone else.

The Rendash's reputation had spread. But nobody got involved. The adult world seemed to look the other way. My mother had another breakdown. This time my two brothers and I ended up shipped off to a relatives house, away from Worcester. We were only gone a couple of weeks. My mother seemed so tired. She looked pale when she came to get us. My other brother and sisters had stayed with some neighbors.

Her voice was crackled and her eyes sad. She'd become very weak. Hardly a drop of energy surfaced. She'd try to smile but that took effort. Something was going on. We felt it. His Highness said we'd all better stop fighting and stay away from the house. This would help Ma. Is this why my father left? I asked myself.

The tree on Tacoma Street was in full bloom. All of the BlackHawks layed there thinking about doing something that would last most of the day. Craig thought about Mt. Pleasant Country Club, to caddie. He said the smaller BlackHawks could come along, but wouldn't be able to carry any golf bags. I just wanted to get out of the zoo. Jake srood up looking down Tacoma Street towards the Curtis Apartments.

These were the larger of the project buildings. It really wasn't BlackHawk territory. Nobody ever bothered us, when we walked past that section of the zoo. The kids down there went to Clark Street School also. We knew eachother. They knew the BlackHawks.

Craig and Jake picked out who they wanted to go with them to the Country Club. We had to hitchhike. This was the first time , most of us thumbed anywhere. We separated into two groups. Craig, His Majesty, Rodent and Cory. Jake, Carlo, Shawn, Brian and I stayed at the guard rails. Right below the zoo. We had to take route 70 to Boylston. Craig took his guys up the road abit. Jake stuck his thumb out standing close to the shoulder of the road. The rest of us sat on the rail.

My hair was cut short. Ma did this to keep us cooler in the summer. We sat there awhile. Carlo stood behind me picking nits out of my hair. Lots of kids seemed to have bugs, in their hair around this time of year. Jake carried a bug comb on him. He handed it ti Carlo. He almost ripped the hair out of my head. Trying to clean my head from the nits.

A Cadillac stopped. A man with a cigar let his window down, and asked where we were heading? "We're going up to Mt. Pleasant! answered Jake. "Hop in" the man said.We all jumped in. Jake in the front and the rest of us in the back. Going Caddying? asked the man. Good, he said while puffing on a large cigar. I'm going up that way to play some golf. We all smiled. "You boys look a bit young to be hitchhiking this far, don't you think?

The small of the cigar hit our noses.Oh no, said Jake. We do this all the time. The man looked in his rear view mirror suspiciously. It went quiet. Carlo kept pinching my side, trying to make me laugh. Shawn and Brian watched out the windows, while we passed the intersection of 70 and 140.

All you kids going to caddie? the man asked. No, just us bigger kids. I looked ahead and saw Craig and the others along the side of the road. We road pass them quickly. We all turned our heads around and waved at them. They had walked quite a ways. We'd meet them up there anyway. It took almost twenty minutes to reach Mt. Pleasant. The man let us off by the caddy shack. We waited for the other guys for almost an hour.

When they arrived we all went over to the large club house. Sitting on the benches, soaking up the morning sun. The Caddy Master came out and started picking some caddies. He just looked and laughed at me, Carlo, Rodent and Brian. He pointed to Jake. "Come here" he said. Jake stood up. Take those clubs in the black bag over there. Wait for Mr. Gordon. A few minutes later The King, Craig, Scott and Cory were picked. They were going to caddie for some ladies. We sat there watching as a man went up to Jake. It was the man who had given us a ride.

Oh! so your my caddie huh! O.K. let's go tee off. Jake grabbed the bag almost dragging it across the Mr. Gordon is his name, I thought! He and his friends walked to the green, while Jake and another caddy stood nearby. After teeing off, Jake disappeared out onto the course. The others followed.

The rest of us sat there awhile until getting up to go over to the caddy shack. A couple of hours later the others returned. They came running towards the shack. How much did you guys make? asked Carlo. Jake said, that fuck'in kike Gordon gave me a Quarter tip. What a cheap Bastard. Yeah yeah! replied Craig you think he's cheap, those broads didn't give us a tip at all. Jake started laughing. Well that fuck'in Jew ain't got no golf balls in his bag. I took' em all. The others did the same. Jake went to the counter at the shack and bought a club sandwich. Giving half to Carlo. The others bought theirs and divided them up with the rest of us.

After sucking down some of the sandwich, we headed to the main road to hitchhike back to the zoo. Nobody would give us a ride for over an hour. Craig and his guys walked ahead a ways. We waited. Once again the Cadillac pulled up . It was Mr. Gordon.

Going home hey boys? he said with the cigar tightly gripped between his teeth. Yeah, that's right replied Carlo. Hop in, he said. This time Carlo got in front. Jake climbed in back with us. The ride home seemed endless. Jake had pulled out his pocket knife and began slicing the seat beneath us. I just sat there listening to the car radio. "Mack the Knife was playing. "Then Elvis Presley's Love Me Tender". Jake was shreading the seat. The zoo was now just ahead in view. The car stopped. "Well, there you are boy's. See you later, said Mr. Gordon. Thanks alot Sir, replied Jake. We all climbed out quickly. Mr. Gordon looked ahead waving his hand towards the zoo.

I took a glance at the seat, when I hopped out. It was all wrecked. Jake yelled, let's get going quick before he spots it. Mr. Gordon drove off. That fuck'in Jew ain't gonna cheat me out of any money, said Jake. Gard-damn Kike! I fixed his ass. He began laughing. Them Jews think because they got lots of money and Cadillacs, that they can shit on project people. Fuck them! We laughed, all the way up Tacoma Street.

We settled down at the tree. It was early afternoon. Craig talked with Jake and his Highness. While the rest of us eyed the girls passing by. Half of them were pregnant. Some young girls who learned too late about sex and it's aftermath. Who cared? Nobody. The adults called them whores and sluts. It was as common as divorce. No big deal.

The "Drive-In"

It was my birthday the next day. I would turn six. No party, no gifts. Just like my last one. The gang teased me, until supper time came. Let's go to the Drive-In tonite, said Scott. There's suppose to be a good movie playing. It's a long walk, so we'd better get going. Before it gets dark and the movie starts. We all met after supper down Carlo's. Jake grabbed a flashlight, as he headed out the door. "So Rabbi" it's your birthday tomorrow heh? said Jake. Yup! I replied. "Tonite you can have a front row seat". joked Carlo. We walked up to the summit throwing rocks at the street lights. We only got two direct hits.

Another couple of miles and we'd be there. The people in their cars eyed us as we headed up West Boylston Street. Single file all the way. Next to the drive-in, was a Bowling Alley. We stopped there a couple minutes to plan our entrance. Craig told us as soon as the movie started was the best time to sneak in. Between the Bowling Alley and the drive-in were some trees and bushes. They blocked the view.

The whole drive-in was surrounded by woods, and Mosquitos. "They were in for a feast tonite" I thought. Jake led us across a small brook into the wooded section, dividing the drive-in and alley in half. It was difficult in the dark. Only one flashlight guided us through the thick brush. A few minutes later we were behind the projection room at the edge of the woods. Damn Mosquitos! said Carlo. Jake took a speaker off it's pole and turned up the volume. "Not to many cars tonite" said Scott. We were too busy slapping ourselves, trying to exterminate very mosquito that hummed by. I felt the large welts on my body. Everybody lighted cigarettes. It was in vain. The mosquitos were just too many. I was ready to leave.

The movie was a Western. Cowboys and Indians. My favorite. When intermission came Carlo, Jake, The King and I went to the concession stand to get some soda. After getting the soda, we stood there for a few minutes watching the people getting all kinds of food for their kids. A couple of teenagers in leather jackets came up to us and asked us who we were with. Trouble again. Jake told them we were with our father's, up in back. One of the teenagers looked around the corner of the stand checking out the cars. Where? he said. "Up there near the back" replied Jake.

Carlo whispered in my ear to get, ready to fight. There were three of them and four of us. But they were alot bigger. The tallest one grabbed Jake by his shirt and pushed him against the wall. Where you from? he said. "The Projects" replied Jake. Great Brook Valley? questioned the kid. Yeah, yeah, said Jake. You ain't with your father you little punk, you fuckers don't have father's right? What do you want from us? asked Jake. "Your money punk" replied the kid holding Jake. The King was getting angry, and so were the rest of us. "Come on" you guys, let's go, said Jake. You ain't going nowhere, said the tall one. Fuck you we ain't said Jake angrily. "get your hands off me now! The kid took Jake with two hands and pushed him against the wall again. That did it! Jake grabbed him by the throat and started choking him. Then he took his huge left hand and gave him a backhand across the face. Carlo quickly grabbed one of the others, jumping on his back pulling him backwards to the ground. The King and I got the other one. I went to his legs and sunk my teeth in tightly, while my brother pulled his hair. Hitting him with a right upper cut. Jake got the tall one real good. He was bleeding badly.

Carlo went animalistic on his kid. While my brother and I finished the other one off. It was over in a couple minutes. We ran to the others. We told them what happened. Jake couldn't understand why these kids were bothering us. We just came to watch the movie.

A few minutes later the second movie began. The mosquitos were driving us nuts! Everybody was sick of them by now. Craig told Jake he wanted to get going cause it was a long walk back and besides, the bites were making us scratch them until we bled. Jake agreed and headed around the drive-in the same way we came in.

West Boylston Street wasn't lighted very well and it was a long straight walk. We stuck close together. For some reason Jake and Craig decided to take Burncoat Street up to Clark Street home. We were halfway down Clark Street when a car full of teenagers pulled up along side of us. Two of them got out and started yelling at us. I recognized the taller one. It was the same asshole that grabbed Jake at the drive-in. This time there were more with him. The kid went up tp Jake and slapped him right in the face. Jake just stood there for a second as though he were a statue. Everyone else started walking down Clark Street. We stopped. Rodent and I picked up a couple large pieces of tar and yelled to Jake. Jake! run! He turned and looked at us. We were in position. Rodent and I whipped the pieces of tar, hitting the kid in the side and neck. Jake came running passed us.

The BlackHawks had to this time. There was no way we were going to beat these guys. There were to many. They were alot bigger than us. Everyone jumped over the bushes along the yards of the houses on Clark Street, as though we were Olympic hurdlers. If we couldn't get over them we'd go through them. Behind us followed the other's who were in their car. We all ran through the neighborhood like rabbits from dog's. The zoo wasn't far now. We were by St. Nick Ave. We lost them. The BlackHawks made it again. Jake paused for a moment while we all tried catching our breaths.Trembling, Nice shot! Rabbi said Jake. You too Rodent. We smiled. You to did good. Smart thinking. Everyone praised us. Twenty minutes later we were all down Carlo's cellar, relieved. That was close you guy's. Next time we'll have to plan something before we get to the drive-in said Jake. All of us were so tired now, so we decided to call it a night.

I couldn't sleep thinking about what might have happened if we hadn't hit the kid with the hunks of tar. My poor face. My brother's and I were full of bites. Gar-damn mosquitos.

Lincoln Country Club

Early the next morning Carlo came by my house. I was awakened by a brief number of tappings on the bedroom window.

I looked out and noticed him standing below the window throwing some pebbles. I stuck my head out the window and asked him what he was doing there so early. It was six A.M. "Come on down here" we're gonna go up to the golf course. Which one? I asked. "Lincoln Country Club" he said with a wide grin on his face. "Get your brother's". My brother's and I dashed out the door. The others were waiting across the street by the tunnel entrance on Chino Ave. Jake stood on the path where we had defeated the Red Cats. "We're going looking for golf balls" he said. There's lots of them in the pond and there's always some in the brook. We can sell them to Jim Gorman, the owner. Only thing is that we can't get caught walking around the course. Gorman will beat our brains in if he catches us.

Lincoln Country Club was quite different from Mt. Pleasant Country Club. It was a poor mans golf course. No Jews. It had only nine holes. There it was, directly across from Lincoln Plaza.We'd cut through there alot after stealing from the plaza. The worst golfers in the world must have played there because there were always golf balls to be found in the pond, brook and woods. We trampled through the woods and swampy area that surrounded the rear of the course. You could smell the skunk cabbage as we walked along the path created by project kids who explored the area all the time.

The brook was never too deep in early summer. We'd walk in it feeling the grassy and muddy edges searching for golf balls. That was the easy part. We spent a few hours looking in the brook. Jake wanted to move on to the pond where most of the balls were. The pond was full of broken beer bottles and other trash that the golfers had thrown inti it. Full of mud too. For some reason Gorman had left a small cement mixing tub on the edge of the pond. Jake and Carlo pushed themselves out to the middle with a long branch from a tree. Searching along the sides for the balls. This was dangerous because Gorman could appear out of nowhere at any time with his old trucks. Jake and Carlo would have to push the tub back to shore quickly to escape. We were gonna sell the golf balls back to Gorm .., so we could get to go to the movies. He was a mean middle aged man with an angry face. He hated anybody on his course who wasn't playing golf. Especially kids.

Project kids. We'd been up there quite a few times before, but Gorman never got close enough to us to know what we looked like. He sure tried catching us though. It's a good thing that old truck couldn't go through trees. All of us were in the pondfsticking our hands in the mud searching with our fingers for the golf balls. AMything that was small and round came up a ball. The pond smelled like shit. And so did the balls. Scott brought a couple of pillow cases with him to put the balls in. We had to be very careful searching with our hands.

Slowly feeling in the water squeezing the mud between our fingers. We'd whisper to each other because of the echo around the pond. Someone would always look-out for Gorman. He'd sometimes come pissing over the hill in his truck almost trying to run us over. What hate. We couldn't tell how good the balls were until after they'd been scrubbed clean at Scott's house. Carlo yelled from the cement tub. "Rodent and Rabbi, go to the Plaza and get some lighter fluid! How much? I asked. "A couple cans will do" replied Carlo. I didn't know what the heck he wanted the lighter fluid for. We left.

It was no problem getting the fluid. In and out in a flash. We got back about forty-five minutes later. The rest of the boys were just getting out of the pond. What's this lighter fluid for? I asked. Carlo said, you'll see, you'll see. All of us headed up the hill towards the sixth hole. At the top of the hill by the side of the course was a tall grassy area. Some picker bushes were scattered about. We stopped. In front of us stood a large dirt mound. Red ants all over it. Carlo walked on top of it. Stomping his feet all over it. The ants were coming out of the hole by the hundreds. They were everywhere. "Give me the lighter fluid" said Carlo. We stood there watching as he squirted the cans emptying both of them on the mound. Give me a fuckin' match" he said.

These fuckers are going to cook! Carlo stepped away from the mound and tossed a couple matches igniting the fluid. Ants everywhere. They were going wild. Jake poked the mound making the ants come out even more.Everybody grabbed some rocks nearby whipping them into the mound.The sun was making me sweat. I looked down and saw the red ants on the bottom of my pants. They started biting us. "Let's get out of here" said Craig.

We got to wash these balls at my house and come back later to see if Gorman will buy them from us. When we finally got to Craig's house the mud on our clothes was dry. Mrs. Hampton opened the door and started yelling at Craig and Scott. "You boys have been up the golf course again haven't you? "Yeah Ma, said Scott. "Your not coming in this house with those muddy clothes!

Her house was immaculate. So different from the rest of the BlackHawks homes. Oh ours were clean but she had some real fine furniture. Modern. She even had a piano. After scolding Craig and Scott she let them in allowing me and Jake in too. "Shake that nasty mud from your clothes and take off those wet sneakers" she said angrily. "I don't want no mess up there! Rinse out the bathtub when your done too! The others waited by the trees. Scott and I got the vegatable brush and went upstairs. Jake carried a pillow case half full of golf balls. So did Craig.

Scott filled the tub up with warm water. Craig climbed in the tub and began moving the balls around with his feet.

It took almost two hours to clean all the golf balls. Half of them had slices in them. They were no good. Gorman wouldn't buy them. We must have had close to two hundred balls. Jake figured about ten cents a piece. We'd be rich! What a mess we made. We sneaked out of the house before Mrs. Hampton could see the mess. At the tree we made plans to go back to Lincoln Country Club and sell the balls. Jake, Carlo and I were to go in and see Gorman. I didn't look forward to that. The rest of the boys stayed in the woods by the clubhouse, while we went in. There he sat. Gorman was sitting with some other guys laughing and drinking some beers. Jake approached Gorman cautiously. "What are you doing in here? Gorman said. As he eyed us all from the top to bottom. "Ah Mr. Gorman replied Jake. We'd like to know if you would like to buy some golf balls from us. They're nice and clean. Take a look. "I don't need no golf balls kids" he said angrily. "Please Mr. Gorman, just look at these, said Jake.

He opened the pillow case and peeked in. "O o o ops! Gorman dropped the case and the balls went all over the floor. "Son of a bitch" yelled Gorman shaking his head. Alright, alright, how much? he asked. "Ah, ten cents a piece please, answered Jake. "No, no said Gorman. A nickel each and no more. Jake looked at us. We all frowned. "They're real nice balls" went Jake. "Look replied Gorman, I know where you little hoods got these balls. You ain't suppose to be on my property. I've seen you kids by my pond haven't I? Not us replied Jake. "We got these up Mt. Pleasant. "Sure, sure you did. A nickle a piece and no more said Gorman. Jake looked to us again. We nodded yes. "Alright Mr. Gorman" said Jake hesitantly. Jake didn't look to happy. He gave us ten bucks for all of them.

We walked out quickly before Gorman did any re-thinking. Jake cursed him all the way back to the others. "That fuck cheated us" he said. Let's see, how can we pay him back. M m m m Jake thought. We were suppose to go to the movies with the money we got for the balls. Jake came up with something better. First we had to go to the Plaza to rob a few things. Rodent and Carlo went to First National. The King and I went to WoolWorth's. Scott, Craig and the others went to White's to ride the escalators. Jake had taken Cory with him to the liqueur to see if anyone going in would buy for us.A half hour later everyone met across the street. Carlo and Rodent had grabbed three bar-b-q'd chickens off the roticory at First National. My brother and I stole a couple packs of playing cards. Jake managed to get some drunk to buy three G.I.Q.'s (Giant Imperial Quarts) of beer. Shawn and Scott went back to First National and stole a couple large bags of M.&M.'s. Jake hadn't told us what we were going to do with all the things we got. He just said that Gorman was going to be in for a big surprize the next day. We all headed up the hill through the woods surrounding the golf course. It was late afternoon when we finished collecting the dead wood Jake had wanted for the camp fire we were going to use

We cleared a small area around the campfire so the woods wouldn't catch on fire. Everyone pulled up some large rocks and used them as chairs. Jake waited until twilight before lighting the fire. The only thing that was left of the Barb-B-Q'ed chickens were the greasy bones. Craig started a card game using the M.&M's as money. Each of us had a share. The beer had gotten warm. Jake wanted to save the beer until it had become dark out. He told us not to eat the M & M's until later.

As soon as the sky went dark, Jake filled us in on what was on his mind. Okay, tonite we're going to have a ball. Gorman thinks he screwed us but I got news for him. That fucker ain't going to get away with cheating us. He grabbed a G.I.Q. taking a swig,then passed it to Carlo. We kept passing it around until it was empty. His Magesty shook the last drop into his mouth. Jake grabbed another one. "Let's play strip poker" said Craig. Whoever loses has to eat some M & M's and go onto the golf course naked and run around for five minutes. We all agreed. Rodent was the first one to lose. He took off his shirt and ate a handful of M & M's. The mixture of beer, chicken and M & M's had made us fart constantly while playing cards. Six hands later there stood Scott stalk naked. Jake told him to go on the course and run around yelling"Gorman eats the BlackHawks shit" We laughed loudly until he came back. I could feel the rumbling in my stomach. I knew I had to take a crap any moment.

A few minutes later I stood there naked as could be. Jake told me to go onto the course. "Rabbi, go over to the green and shit in the hole. "We'll fix these golfer's" he said grinning. I went to the cup and squatted. I filled the cup half way. Then I walked to the edge of the course and finished doing the rest.

When I returned all the boys were acting strange. Talking loud and stuttering. Carlo grabbed the last bottle of beer and began drinking it. The moon was full. We all took our clothes off carrying them with us as we headed out onto the course. "Okay you guys, we're going to shit in a few more cups" said Jake. We separated into two groups. A short while lat . we met at the path going towards the zoo.

Tomorrow morning we'll come back and watch from the woods. I can't wa't to see them golfers faces when they putt their balls into the cup. We were drunk. When we reached the zoo on Chino Ave. my mother was outside on the front steps. She saw us. His Highness, Rodent and I walked towards her thinking of what to say. I could feel her anger as she puffed on her Pall Mall. Where have you been? she asked angrily. Don't lie to me either. I turned away and watched the others hurry down Chino Ave. "We were watching the water go in the tunnel Ma, replied the King. "All this time she asked. "Yeah Ma" agreed Rodent. "Look at your hands" your such a mess. Get in the house now! We ran in. She made us take a bath together, scolding us for being gone all day. Without telling her where we were going. I could hear the rest of my brother's and sisters giggling.

We climbed in bed after cleaning up. We fell asleep fast. It was a long day. The next morning my brother's got up early and we sat on the front steps waiting for Jake and the others to come by. It was very hot. The sun warmed our bodies making us sweat. When the others arrived we quickly went over to the tunnel entrance and splashed our faces with the cold water from the brook.

When we got on the path leading to the course, Craig said let's have a contest to see who could piss the longest up the path. His Highness and Carlo went first. Carlo must have walked thirty yards before he finally stopped pissing. After everyone had done theirs Carlo still was the champ. "It must have been all the beer he drank last night" I thought. We hid behind some brush waiting for the golfers to show up. The first golfer came over the hill shortly. We didn't make a sound. There were three of them. We sat silently while they approached the green.

There wasn't a pole at this hole. We always chucked it into the swamp whenever we passed through the course. Gorman would go wild when he checked the holes. One of the golfers stood with his putter anticipating his next shot. I held my hand over my mouth. He hit the ball and it went right in the cup. Nobody moved as the man bent over to get the ball. He reached in and pulled the ball out. It was covered with shit! We broke out laughing. He stood up. Took his putter and began pounding the green with it. "What's the matter with you? you crazy or something" another man yelled. "Look at this" he said angrily. Some mother fucker shit in the hole.

The other men cracked up. Then they searched with their eyes into the woods. Nobody moved. The man left the ball on the green. The others didn't bother playing theirs out. They grabbed their golf bags and moved on to the next tee. Jake ran out to the green and pissed in the hole. He waved at us to come across the green to the other side. We went into the woods following them up to another green. A few minutes later we watched as some other golfers approached the green. Boy did that golfer go nuts. He took his bag of clubs and threw them all over the place. We didn't move. A short time later we heard a truck coming. Suddenly over the hill came Gorman. He looked like a man after blood. He stopped by the green looking in our direction. He spotted us! Everyone panicked. "Let's get out of here" yelled Jake. We dashed through the woods not looking behind once. We made it! When we reached the Plaza we sat on the grass laughing about what just happened.

Jake sat proudly once again. Later we went down to Grub's Market. Scott and Craig took a couple of club sandwiches and walked out. The rest of us followed. Jake wanted to go home. He said his father was coming to visit him for awhile. He said we all could come and have a look.

Everybody's Father

Mr. Buffone stood attthe doorway with his arms stretched across the frame. Jake looked just like him. Black wavy hair. Italian. He smiled at Jake. Carlo said hi, but his father didn't respond. "Wher ou been Jake? I've been waiting for you and Carlo for over an hour. "We were playing at my friends house up the street" replied Jake. "Come on in the house" he said turning his head inside the door. The rest of us stood outside thinking about how lucky Jake and Carlo were to have a father who would come visit them.

Up until that time none of us had seen anyone's father. My father never came at all. No phone calls, no letters, no nothing. It's as if we didn't exist. I guess when he divorced my mother, he divorced us also. My mother never spoke about him either. She was still too hurt. He left us with nothing. Not even a good-bye. My brother's and I sometimes brought his name up. Whenever someone asked if we knew where he was. We didn't know. Each time he was mentioned, we'd only get angry anyway. His Highness went around the back of Carlo's apartment and peaked through the window. We followed. "What are you doing King? I asked.I'm looking at Jake's father, stupid! "What for? I asked. "To see what he does. I want to see if he hits them like our old man did. "Why would he hit them? I asked. "I don't know" replied the King.

"Why did our old man hit us? I shut up. We watched them sit down at the kitchen table. Thw whole family sat talking and eating some spaghetti. One of Jake and Carlo's favorite meals. I thought about my family before the divorce. We never sat at the table together. At least not with the old man. He'd be out getting drunk or with some other woman.

Mr. Buffone saw us staring through the window. He didn't say anything. Every few minutes he'd look again.

My brother's and I had only been inside Carlo's omce. The only one that ever let us in was Mrs. Hampton. Craig and Scott always let us in. Mrs. Hampton would smile at us. She never had much to say but she smiled alot. Sometimes she'd [illegible] us sit in the living room listening to her practice the piano. We'd sit quietly watching the ticking gadget go back and forth helping her to keep the beat.

Mr. Buffone got up and poured wine into some glasses. They all smiled. I wish I were inside with them. He seemed like a nice man. Jake and Carlo never spoke about him that much. They just said that he'd come around if they got in trouble. I wondered. Maybe he knew what we'd been up too. Jake looked over at us waving to get away from the window. He got up and came to the back door. "What are you guys doing looking in my house? We're trying to eat. Do you mind? "Didn't you ever see a father before? We moved away from the windo.. "Hey! I'll be out in a little while. Go up to the tree.

I thought about Mr. Buffone. I wondered if he knew my father. Jake and Carlo came up to the tree about an hour later. "Did your father leave" asked Rodent. "Yeah, yeah, replied Jake. Carlo looked angry. "He never stays long anyway said Jake. He's always busy doing something. We sat by the tree awhile. Scott had gone into his apartment to get some of the crummy golf balls we'd gotten from the golf course. Everyone grabbed a few and whipped them down Tacoma Street. They bounced so high, sometimes going out of view. We spent the rest of the day wrestling and jumping over the fire hydrant that stood next to the tree. Jake finished the evening telling scary stories.

The next thing we knew it was August. Hot and humid. We'd gone swimming down at Brownie Beach on Lake Quinsigamond. Sometimes up at Holland Rink. It was a good way to keep cool and to stay clean.

The first weekend in August drained most of the energy out of us all. It had been so humid that kids and adults alike found their own methods of keeping cool. Tempers miraculously were kept under control. The BlackHawks decided this was a good time to go into the tunnel again, since it was dark and cool inside. We'd taken enough flashlights this time so nobody would ..eep up the tunnel blindly. When we started up the tunnel in early afternoon, the sky had been a bit cloudy. There hadn't been much water coming through the tunnel. Just enough to drench our sneakers. It felt good. The only ones who were aware of us being there was ourselves. It had taken almost two hours to get to the Chino Ave. end of the tunnel. When we reached the end we all rested a few minutes, looking up at the sky.

It had grown very dark. Rain lightly splashed down onto the steel bars at the entrance. "I think we better head back down the tunnel before it really starts pouring" said Jake. We watched as lightning started filling the sky. " were scared. Never were we caught in the tunnel during a heavy rain. It had made us extremely nervous. Questions ran through our minds. What if the rain became too heavy? Will the water come into the tunnel to high a level? Will we make it out in time? Jake looked worried. Suddenly after an enormous crash and continuious flashes of lightning, the rain water poured heavily down.

The rain water had no place to go but through the tunnel. It raised up to our knees in just a few minutes. Jake told me, Cory, Rodent and Shawn to start down the tunnel. I didn't want to move. I looked at my brother George before I entered the hole. About fifteen yards from the entrance I felt the water pushing at my legs, with such forc. I tried holding the sides of the tunnel with the palms of my hands. I was in vain. I began screaming. I could hear the others crying behind me. As I turned my head to look behind me I was knocked down into the rushing water. Trying despartly to keep my head out so I could breath. Cory, Rodent and Shawn were directly behind in a sitting position. The water was now up to our necks. Everyone was yelling for help. The water was pushing us down at an incredible speed. I lost the flashlight I'd been carrying. Now the tunnel ahead was pitch dark. It seemed like hours before the water had finally forced us out the other end at Constitution Ave. When Cory, Rodent, Shawn and myself reached the end we stood at the entrance expecting to see the others coming out at any moment.

They didn't appear. We began yelling and crying for them. They still didn't come. The water was coming out even higher. Minutes went by. Still no sign of the others. I felt weak. I just knew that they had drowned. Carlo, my best friend. Jake, the kid who had always treated me like I was his brother. My own brother George. Craig and Scott, the Hampton brothers who were kind and loyal to us all. All dead. We cried and cried. We all wanted to go back in the tunnel to search for them, but the force of the water wouldn't allow us too. It was ll raining heavily. Cory got so scared he ran home to find someone to help us. We kept yelling into the tunnel.

A few minutes later the rain began to lighten up. We stood at the entrance shivering from nervousness. Just as we moved away from the entrance I heard a voice in the tunnel scream Geronimo! ! ! Out came Carlo with a huge grin on his face. Then Jake, then the King, then Scott, then Craig. They made it! It was a miracle. They couldn't understand why we rushed at them crying and reaching to hug them. "We thought you guys were dead" cried Rodent.

"Where have you been? What happened? What do you think? you clown said Jake. We ain't stupid. When it got too deep and the water reached our heads we climbed up to one of the manholes and waited until the water went down. I could not stop crying. Jake and the others began laughing. "What a ride! said Carlo. We've got to do this again sometime. I looked at Carlo amazed at his calm behavior. How brave he was. Nothing could take away his desire to go on. As we walked away from the tunnel the sky became bright. The Sun crashed through the clouds. It was over, for now.

That night Jake bribed another alki to get us a couple more G.I.Q's. We celebrated our triumpth over the tunnel.The next few days were spent building up our supplies for my callar. Cartons of cigarettes, can goods and even a small amount of clothing filled the cellar cages. Everything was going so well. Nobody around knew what we had. At least we thought they didn't.

The Law

We really hadn't noticed the silence in the air that surrounded our apartment block or the change in the other kids who lived nearby. It seemed all they did was stare at my brother's and I as we would skip out the door and head for Carlo's. It was if they were waiting for something to happen. We were to busy with BlackHawk business to care.

A few days later upon returning to my cellar on Chino Ave. my eyes searched for any sign of adults who might be watching out their windows or doors. Whenever we'd go down the cellar it was important that we wouldn't be seen. Jake always stressed that nobody should know our business. Ever! That was rule number one, if you were to retain a BlackHawk. It took alot of effort to be sneaky. It was a game. Who could be sneakier. Adults or ___. Most of the things we learned were from the adults. Only we were always told we were too young to do them.

Don't hit other people, don't steal, don't lie, don't be sneaky. All the don'ts became do's. Why should they have all the fun? Carlo, my brothers and I went down the cellar to check and make sure everything was still there.

It was around eight-thirty that morning when someone began knocking loudly on the cellar door. We had just lit up a couple of cigarettes, filling the air with smoke. We stood silent for what seemed hours. The banging grew louder. "Don't say anything or open the door" ordered Carlo. Maybe they'll go away. "Open up in there, it's the Police" said a voice on the other side of the door. Carlo shut the lights off. Seconds later the door flew open and in came a half dozen cops. The Enemy. Carlo tried running out the door but one of the cops quickly grabbed him and threw him against the wall. He told him not to move. "What have we here?" said a cop. "Well , well, you little hoods got your own fuckin' grocery store down here. "Unbelievable" said another.

Project animals! another said smiling. Get their names and take them upstairs, said another. When we got outside the whole neighborhood had gathered. They were all pointing at us and whispering. I spotted my mother hanging clothes on the clothes-line. Her eyes just about popped out of her head. She dropped the pins and came over to us. "What's the matter here?" she said as she began to tremble. "These your boy's? asked a cop. "Those three are" she said pointing to my brother's and I. "The other one lives down the street I think. Carlo pulled away from the cop holding him. He began swearing and swinging wildly. "Put that kid in the car" said a cop. "We'd like your name and the names of your boy's Mam" said the cop. May we come in your house a moment. One of the cops stood there watching us while the others took my mother down to the cellar.

We sat quietly. Staring at each other. A few minutes later they came back and began asking us all kinds of questions. We didn't say anything. My brother the King shook his head back and forth signaling Rodent and I not to say a thing. The cops were yelling at us. "You want to go to Jail? your all in big trouble. Where did you get all that stuff? Who else did it with you? We want their names! Now! "We found it" said Rodent. "Yeah, that's right" said his Majesty. I sat there just watching as my mother moved to the couch and began crying. "I've tried and tried with these boys" she said. They don't have a father. "It's hard raising seven kids without a man. "I've tried and tried. The cops kept trying to get us to talk but we wouldn't say anything. "Are you on Welfare Mam? asked a cop. Of course we are you Jerk! yelled the King. Does this look like Salisbury Street to you? "Don't get smart punk, said the cop standing at the door.

"We're going to have to nitify your Social Worker Mrs. Rendash" said a cop. "I know", I know my mother replied crying. She looked at us shaking. The cops left a few minutes later. They told my mother not to let us out of the house. We laughed. She knew she couldn't keep us in. "I don't want you boys going anywhere" Don't leave the yard, she said crying.

The next morning my brothers and I sat on the front steps thinking about what had happened. We better just stick around here awhile said King. Ma's pretty mad. About a week later we heard that Carlo got sent to reform school. Ma didn't say anything to us. A couple days later, while we were outside playing a man had gone into the house. We didn't know who he was. About an hour later my mother stood at the door and called us in. "This man is going to take you Downtown to get you some new clothes. We smiled. He took the King and Rodent first. I sat on the steps a couple hours waiting for them to return. My mother hadn't said anything to me.

When the man came back my brothers weren't with him. "Where's my brothers? I asked nervously. "They're visiting some friends" replied the man. "Come on Benny" you want some new clothes? "Yeah, sure, O.K. I said as he put his hand on my shoulder leading me to his car. I looked outside my window and didn't see my mother. My little sister waved at me while he drove away. We spent over an hour buying all kinds of clothes. I even got a bathrobe. Slippers too. After we got finished shopping we went to the car.

He looked at me and began talking. "Benny, how would you like a new Mother and Father? I looked at him as if he were crazy. "I got a mother and I don't need no father" I replied."Benny, you can live in a big house with your own bed and you'll have your own bedroom and yard. Your mother knows. Knows what? I replied. "You see Benny, your mother can't take care of you anymore. She's very sick. That's why I'm here. I'm going to help you. Your brothers are at their new homes now. I don't want a new home, I just want to be with my mother, I said. I began to cry. "Listen Benny, you can't go back to your mother now. Maybe someday, but now you must go with me.

I began thinking about Carlo and my brothers. About the others too. What about the other BlackHawks I thought. Where are they? What's going to happen to them? "Why am I going to a new home. I liked the one I have. I don't need a new mother and father. Why am I going away? He kept driving.